

Site name: 32-38 Buttermarket

Site ref: IAS3201

HER ref: IPS 752

CIMS Accession No: IPSMG:R.2009.66

NGR: TM16404453

Extent : 397 sq m

Circumstances of excavation

The site was excavated prior to the Ipswich Central Area Shopping Scheme (I/0/13/87). This development, by Legal and General Assurance Society Ltd, included a large area west of St Stephen's lane (IAS 3104) and this site, previously occupied by the ABC cinema, fronting the Buttermarket and east of the lane.

Site constraints

A wide strip was left unexcavated along the west side of the site, to ensure that no structural damage was caused to the adjacent Ancient House. Archaeological deposits had been destroyed along the Buttermarket frontage by a cinema basement. There was also some truncation caused by the cinema auditorium floor, which sloped southwards, but this was limited as the natural slope of the site was 1:40 from north to south.

Funding bodies

The excavation in 1988, by the Suffolk Archaeological Unit, was funded by Legal and General Property, the Manpower Services Commission (Community Programme), English Heritage and Suffolk County Council.

The Stratigraphic Sequence (by period)

Early Middle Saxon, c.600-700 (EMS)

The Cemetery

Four inhumation graves (0249, 0335, 0407, 0424) belonging to this period, survived the extensive truncation by later features. The graves were a continuation to the north-east of the cemetery found on the St. Stephen's Lane site (IAS 3104) and the whole cemetery has been fully published (Scull 2009).

Middle Saxon, c.700-850 (MS)

A posthole structure (0454), 17 pits (0013, 0032, 0118, 0119, 0124, 0241, 0244, 0246, 0247, 0289, 0306, 0322, 0323, 0324, 0348, 0360, 0369), and a probable well (0012) belonged to this period.

Well 0012 produced over 11kg of iron slag and pit 0013, nearby, a further 2kg. The site produced two mid eighth century sceattas (0001/3201N and 0002/3201N), both residual in later pits (ELS pit 0051 and EMED pit 0245) and a total of 2361 sherds of Ipswich ware.

Well 0012

This well, at the north end of the site, close to the Buttermarket frontage, did not reach the modern water table and any timber lining had decayed. The well pit was roughly circular, 1.6-1.8m across and 5.75m deep. The lowest 60cm of fill could not be excavated and the depth was confirmed with an auger. Below the subsided top layer of dark loam, the fill was predominantly layers of light sands, gravels and silts. A 100g sample from a localised concentration of charred material was floated. It included charcoal, fruitstones of *Prunus spinosa*, seeds of *Malus* and a charred seed of *Vicia/Lathyrus* (Murphy 2004, 11).

Structure 0454

Two parallel, east-west lines of post holes across the middle of the site probably represent the fragmentary remains of a surface laid building.

The north wall comprised eight postholes (0039, 0069, 0070, 0072, 0073, 0074, 0327, 0328).

The south wall comprised twenty two postholes (0281, 0282, 0283, 0284, 0293, 0294, 0296, 0308, 0311, 0358, 0359, 0362, 0365, 0374, 0393, 0406, 0434, 0435, 0436, 0437, 0438, 0441).

An internal, north-south partition comprised four postholes (0100, 0271, 0272, 0280) with an adjacent hearth (0108), filled with burnt sand.

Both external walls appeared to comprise a double line of posts.

Four postholes in the south wall (0282, 0435, 0362, 0365) produced a total of seven Ipswich ware sherds between them.

Postholes 0327 and 0328 were cut by MLS pit 0104. There were no certain MS pits within the area of the building but there were two ELS pits (0102, 0097) and posthole 0393 was cut by ELS pit 0277.

The conclusion must be that the building is most likely of MS date.

Early Late Saxon, c.850-900 (ELS)

One sunken featured building (0317) belonged to this period and 25 pits (0008, 0009, 0015, 0019, 0020, 0033, 0051, 0055, 0068, 0092, 0097, 0102, 0157, 0243, 0264, 0277, 0298, 0302, 0304, 0309, 0338, 0346, 0350, 0396, 0411).

Pit 0304, at the south end of the site and adjacent to building 0317, was 4.5m deep and may have been a well.

1kg of iron slag was recovered from pit 0009.

Flotation columns were taken from pits 0055 and 0068. The sample of 'organic' deposit from 0055 contained abundant phosphatic concretions, fragments of mineral-replaced testa and hilum of *Pisum sativum* and *Vicia faba*, unidentified mineral-replaced seeds, stems and wood, some charcoal and fishbones. The dietary residues are of types common in latrine pits.

The sample from pit 0068 contained a high proportion of phosphatic concretions, with mineral-replaced *Agrostemma* testa, indeterminate seeds, stems and wood, abundant fly puparia, some charcoal and charred cereal grains, scraps of *Mytilus* shell, fishbones and bone fragments. The layer also appears to represent a latrine deposit.

Building 0317 (see scanned plan IAS3201_0317.tif)

This sunken featured building appears to have had a short life as its east end cut ELS pit 0411.

The building had been heavily disturbed by later features, making it difficult to calculate its original dimensions. About 2.1m of a foundation trench (0390, 0404) along the northern side of the building remained intact, along with a short stretch of a similarly narrow trench (0446) and a post hole (0447) on the south indicating a length of 5m, north-south. Post holes 0384, 0387, 0388 and 0401, on the inside edge of trench 0390/0404, formed the north wall, ending in a north-east corner post (0402). The width of the building is uncertain but exceeded 2.7m.

The east wall was represented by a thin line of carbonized wood (0400) along the edge of the pit, presumably the remains of planking, and post holes 0403 and 0402.

The building pit was 40cm deep but, taking into account the truncation of the south end of the site, the original depth would have been nearer 1m. On the north side of slot 390, discoloured natural layers (0391, 0416, 0420) indicated backfill of the gap between the edge of the pit and the timber wall.

A number of thin horizontal bands of light sandy fill, on the base of the pit, probably represent floor surfaces. Further post holes (0318, 0385, 0386, 0389, 0394, 0399) were found cut into these layers.

Middle Late Saxon, c.900-1000 (MLS)

One probable building (0057) and twenty three pits (0042, 0075, 0095, 0096, 0104, 0107, 0116, 0120, 0121, 0143, 0147, 0152, 0158, 0172, 0181, 0202, 0292, 0319, 0354, 0361, 0364, 0379, 0440) belonged to this period. The pits were fairly evenly distributed around the site. A 1.8kg sample of charred material from the western half of pit 0104 was floated. Large charcoal fragments and other charred plant remains were abundant (Murphy 2004, Tables 42-43).

Building 0057

Only the east edge of this large feature was located just inside the west edge of the excavation. Although too little was exposed to be certain, it was probably a sunken featured building. It was 1.2m deep and was traced for 4.5m north-south. It continued, unexcavated, towards the north and the south end appears to have been removed by MLS pit 0120. A foundation trench (0122), 1.5m long and 50cm wide, was recorded against the east wall at the south end and a charcoal band (0132), representing a timber lining, was recorded near the base of the pit.

Early Medieval, c.1000-1200 (EMED)

Twenty six pits (0010, 0053, 0054, 0058, 0064, 0067, 0079, 0083, 0088, 0094, 0115, 0128, 0134, 0182, 0183, 0228, 0237, 0239, 0245, 0268, 0310, 0330, 0333, 0340, 0355, 0357) and a possible well (0046) belonged to this period.

Well 0046

Only the top 80cm of fill of this pit was excavated but it was augered to a depth of 3.9m which is considerably deeper than the average (2m deep) of contemporary rubbish pits and a well is likely.

Late Medieval, c.1200-1450 (LMED)

Eighteen pits (0027, 0035, 0037, 0038, 0077, 0112, 0165, 0168, 0201, 0227, 0229, 0231, 0286, 0290, 0307, 0313, 0351, 0398) belonged to this period, and a further four (0041, 0076, 0366, 0368) were likely to be either contemporary or later in date.

Pits 0201 and 0231 were unusual in being linear and possibly related. Pit 0201 was over 2.7m long, east-west and 0231 was over 3.6m long, north-south. The junction between the two had been destroyed by LMT pit 0174. Both appeared to be deep and had steep profiles. They were excavated to a depth of 1.3m but not bottomed. A large posthole (0221) lay adjacent to the south-east corner of the two pits.

There was no evidence of an industrial function for the pits and they may just mark the corner of a tenement. A line of contemporary pits ran northwards from pit 0231 (0077, 0035, 0037, 0038). The later siting of LMT latrine pit 0148 on the same line as pit 0231 could indicate a similar function.

Pit 0035, in the line of pits, was also unusual. It was 1.2m square and 70cm deep, with steeply sloping sides, and an *in situ* hearth (0048) on its base. The hearth was laid in an oval depression, 45cm deep. The clay hearth changed from unfired at the base, through a red oxidised layer, to a black vitrified surface almost level with the original pit base. Above this hearth base, there was some remnant evidence for a clay lining around the pit edge. The pit had been backfilled with layers of burnt and unfired clay along with laminated layers of dark sandy loam, presumably earlier rakings from the fire, capped with a large plug of gravel-rich grey clay. As no metal slag was associated, it seems most likely that it functioned as a cooking pit and, given its unusual depth, possibly for curing meat and/or fish.

Late Medieval Transitional, c.1450-1600(LMT)

This period is represented by a well (0139) and thirty two pits (0040, 0047, 0056, 0090, 0114, 0129, 0140, 0146, 0148, 0160, 0161, 0164, 0166, 0171, 0174, 0222, 0235, 0260, 0261, 0263, 0266, 0285, 0288, 0295, 0297, 0299, 0303, 0307, 0314, 0315, 0334, 0380) plus a further two (0142, 0176), either this period or later.

Latrine pit 0148

This rectangular pit had been lined with clay and assorted revetment materials. The upper 60cm of the north wall, 1.2m wide, was lined with four horizontal planks (0190-0193), secured behind two vertical posts (0155, 0156), set into clay. The northern 1.6m of both the west and east walls shared the same construction. The west wall planks (0187-0189) were secured with four posts (0154, 0170, 0185, 0186) and the east wall planks (0194-0197) by four posts (0151, 0175, 0178, 0179). The southern 1.7m of both the east and west walls was lined with wicker hurdles (0205, 0212).

The pit narrowed from 1.2m wide at its north end to 80cm wide, where the walls changed from post and plank to hurdle construction. At this point, a partial return of the planking across the trench was indicated on the two sides. This could not be traced all the way across, but an arrangement of post holes (0204), crossing the trench at this point, suggests a sluicing system.

The clay floor (0207) sloped slightly southwards and the south chamber floor was a depression with filled with an organic deposit (0200).

At the south end of the timber structure, pit 0174 appears to be contemporary and an integral part of the structure. Later pit 0161, also LMT in date, at this point had removed any stratigraphic relationship between the two. The filling (0148, 0203) between the planked side walls appears to be fairly uniform, suggesting that it was filled fairly rapidly after it fell out of use.

The function of the structure is unclear, although the clay lining behind the planking and wicker work, and the sluice arrangement, suggests that it was designed to hold liquid. Analysis of the organic material from the floor (0200) showed that, whatever the original function of the feature, it was last used as a latrine pit (Murphy 2004, 11).

The structure must have functioned as an outdoor latrine, with cubicles above the lined pit, which drained into pit 0174, but no analysis was undertaken of the pit contents to confirm its direct association.

Two further phases of LMT pits were cut into the final filling of the latrine pit. Two small pits (0160, 0222) were cut along its eastern edge followed by a deep pit (0161) at its south end. The depth and position of a slot (0173) at its base suggests that it was cut to remove buried structural timbers in pit 0148, presumably for reuse.

Well 0139

This pit, 5m south-east of latrine pit 0148, had evidence of a circular timber lining, and is assumed to be a well. However, the records of the pit are missing and no wood samples were sent for analysis.

Post Medieval, c.1600-1900 (PMED)

Despite the heavy truncation, the base of two cellars belonging to the wing of a building, over 11m long by 4.5m wide, running north-south from the Buttermarket, survived at the north end of the site. The northern cellar was marked by a footing trench (0028) traceable along its west and south sides. The southern cellar survived as a brick floor (0024), which cut LMT pit 0040 suggesting that this cellar was PMED in date. A brick wall (0025/0026) also ran east from the south-east corner of cellar 0024 and the corner (0169) of another brick building lay 7m to the south-east.

These were the only remains of buildings fronting the Buttermarket prior to the construction of the ABC cinema in the 1950s. To the rear of the site, four soakaways (0030, 0138, 0145, 0312) were the only surviving remains associated with the pre-cinema PMED structures.

Modern, c.1900 onwards (MOD)

Few remnants of the cinema had survived demolition apart from the rear wall foundation (0003) of its front basement, stanchion bases (0029, 0240, 0450, 0452), and drains (0007, 0453).

References

Scull, C., 2009 *Early Medieval (Late 5th-Early 8th centuries AD) cemeteries at Boss Hall and Buttermarket, Ipswich, Suffolk* (Soc.Medieval Archaeol. monograph 27)

Murphy, P., et al 2004 *Environmental Archaeology at excavations in Ipswich, Archive Report*

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